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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING COLOMBIA

¶1. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Colombia. While security in Colombia has improved significantly in recent years, violence by narco-terrorist groups continues to affect some rural areas as well as large cities. The potential for violence by terrorists and other criminal elements exists in all parts of the country. This updates and replaces the Travel Warning for Colombia issued August 7, 2008 to update information on recent security incidents and on contacting and registering with the U.S. Embassy in Colombia.

¶2. Violence has decreased in many urban areas; however, the level of violence in Buenaventura remains high. Small towns and rural areas of Colombia can still be extremely dangerous due to the presence of narco-terrorists. Common crime remains a significant problem in many urban and rural areas. For additional details about the general criminal threat, please see the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia.

¶3. Extortion-related bombings have occurred recently in Bogota, Cali, and several smaller cities. On January 27, 2009, an explosion in a commercial building in Bogota resulted in two fatalities. On August 9, 2008, a bomb detonated in northern Bogota injuring 8 persons, including one American. Many expatriates live in and frequent the neighborhoods where these explosions occurred.

¶4. The incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak at the beginning of this decade. Nevertheless, terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other criminal

organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors. Kidnapping in rural areas is of particular concern. On July 2, 2008, the Government of Colombia rescued 15 hostages, including three Americans, who had been held for more than five years. Although the U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped Americans, it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to or strike deals with kidnappers. Consequently, the U.S. government's ability to assist kidnapping victims is limited.

¶5. U.S. government officials and their families in Colombia are permitted to travel to major cities in the country, but normally only by air. They may not use inter- or intra-city bus transportation, or travel by road outside urban areas at night. All Americans in Colombia are urged to follow these precautions.

¶6. Americans living or traveling in Colombia are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website (<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui>) to obtain updated information on travel and security within Colombia.

¶7. The U.S. Embassy is located at Calle 24 Bis No. 48-50 Bogot , D.C. Colombia. Mailing address: Carrera 45 No. 24B-27 Bogot , D.C. Colombia. In case of a serious emergency that jeopardizes the health or safety of an American citizen in Colombia, please call the Embassy at (571) 315-0811; Embassy fax: (571) 315-2197; Consular Section phone: (571) 315-1566. The Embassy's American

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Citizens Services office provides routine information at <http://bogota.usembassy.gov>. For questions not answered there, inquiries may be sent by email to ACSBogota@state.gov.

¶8. The U.S. Consular Agency in Barranquilla, which accepts passport applications and performs notarial services, is located at Calle 77B, No. 57-141, Piso 5, Centro Empresarial Las Americas, Barranquilla, Atlantico, Colombia; telephone (575) 353-2001; fax (011-57-5) 353-5216. The Consular Agency is not staffed to respond to after-hours emergencies; in case of an emergency in the Barranquilla/north coast area, please contact the Embassy in Bogota at (571) 315-0811.

¶9. As the Department develops information on potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threats through its Consular Information Program documents, available on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. U.S. citizens should consult warden messages for Colombia at http://bogota.usembassy.gov/acs_wardenmessage.html, as well as the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia and the Worldwide Caution at <http://travel.state.gov>.

¶10. U.S. travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or, for overseas callers, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

¶11. Minimize Considered
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